Combating Discrimination Through Education:

Some Good Practices in South and Southeast Asia*

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Anti-discrimination education exists in varying forms for different types of schools (public and private, mainstream and special schools), and for different types of programs (national and community levels). They may range from inclusion of the discrimination issue in some lesson plans to whole school program. They may be community/sectoral initiatives or national/governmental programs. But very few of such initiatives are labeled anti-discrimination programs. In Asia as a whole, such explicitly named education program can be found in Japan, Dowa education (the anti-Buraku discrimination education program), and likely in India and Nepal for the anti-Dalit discrimination education programs.[1]

Education policy

A major area of support for access to quality education of people who are discriminated or excluded should be at the policy level. Recognition in the education policies of the problem of discrimination and exclusion against so-called minorities, indigenous people, or those from poor and disadvantaged communities is crucial. One example of an educational policy that proclaims the need to ensure access to quality education alongside the protection of their respective identities is the following 1986 Indian educational policy statement:[2]

> Some minority groups are educationally deprived and backward.[3] Greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interests of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the Constitutional guarantees given to them to establish and administer their own educational institutions, and protection of their languages and culture. Simultaneously, objectivity will be reflected in the preparation of textbooks and in all school activities, and all possible measures will be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum.

It is important to note the two purposes of protecting the rights of the minority groups and integrating their education program into the national education system. This pattern exists in the educational policies in many other countries. The important issue to discuss is the extent of protection, as well as support for the realization, of the rights of the minority, indigenous and other disadvantaged groups in society that the education policies provide.

Schools in rural communities

In most cases, rural schools suffer from inadequate support from the national government. Lack of teachers, teaching/learning materials, school facilities (classrooms, play-

grounds, waterlines, and toilets) have been raised through the years as problems facing rural schools. In some rural communities, children have to walk for hours to go to school.

An example of policy measure supporting schools affecting poor communities is Sri Lanka's Navodya schools project.[4] A December 2004 report says that a "total of 397 schools islandwide received IT [information technology] and science laboratories, libraries and other fundamental inputs creating access for quality education for rural students."[5] The Navodya School Project exemplifies the challenge of addressing not simply the access to education of rural students but also the quality of education that they receive. In the context of Sri Lanka, the project may also have implications in addressing the problem of Singhala-Tamil armed conflict.

India's *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*: *An Initiative for Universal Elementary Education* launched in 2000 is a similar initiative. It gives priority to education of girls (especially those belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and minorities), and focuses on special groups (the inclusion and participation of children from [Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes] SC/ST, minority groups, urban deprived children, children of disadvantaged groups and the children with special needs, in the educational process). It also encourages the "participation of dalits and tribals in the affairs of the school …to ensure ownership of the Abhiyan by all social groups, especially the most disadvantaged."[6] This is also in line with decentralized management of education approach of the initiative. The novelty as well as comprehensiveness of the coverage of this initiative pose a big challenge at the implementation stage.[7]

In Bangladesh, the work of Bangladesh Rural Action Committee (BRAC) in rural areas is another example of support for rural students. Since 1985, BRAC has been providing education in rural communities through its more than 30,000 schools all over the country catering to a million students. BRAC schools provide education to students who have dropped out of regular schools. It likewise set up schools, in cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), for working children who were laid off by garment industries.[8]

The "Lab Schools" project in Thailand is also an example of assistance to schools in rural areas. The project implements the child-friendly schools system by involving the schools, local communities, local governments and private companies in developing and implementing school programs. 90 schools in the rural areas of 76 provinces of the country have been identified to be involved in the project. 31 schools are already part of the project.[9]

The supply of teachers in many countries in South and Southeast Asia is more often not favoring rural schools, the same goes with appropriate support for teaching in terms of teaching materials as well as teacher training. And considering the reality that most of the disadvantaged communities are in the rural areas of South and Southeast Asian countries, the basic problem of inadequate support for rural schools provide much ground for discrimination, even if unintended, to take place in the field of education.

One response to the lack of classrooms and teachers in rural areas is the multigrade system. A version of this system employs active learning concepts in a package of activities such as the following:[10]

> a series of in-service training workshops for teachers at which they reflect on their own experience as students and teachers, develop the materials to be used by students, and form "teacher circles" that meet regularly to help one another with issues in implementing the program; parent involvement activities such as participation in classroom activities as resources for local customs and agricultural pursuits, and as members of the school governing boards; and a series of active learning strategies such as the use of self-instructional guides, learning corners, small group work and

peer teaching, as well as flexible promotion and participation in elected school government.

This package of activities was developed in Colombia under the *Nueva Escuela* (New School) program[11] as a means of coping with the problems of schooling in rural areas. The multigrade system can also be used to support access to education of girls in the rural areas. One multigrade school program in the Philippines is an example of how the *Nueva Escuela* program is implemented. The program has the objective of:[12]

> improving access to primary education by providing complete grade levels in all public elementary schools through the organization of multigrade classes. It also aims to improve quality by increasing teachers' abilities to work with more than one grade simultaneously through training and instructional materials. It legitimized multigrade teaching as a national strategy to improve access to and quality of school in all areas of the country (Miguel & Barsage1997). It works in five areas: curriculum and materials development; staff development; physical facilities; community support; and research, monitoring and evaluation. It has developed a guide minimum learning competencies for multigrade classes, a budget of work and lesson plan for multigrade teachers to follow, a handbook for teachers and example lessons, as well as materials to be used at different grade levels within the same classroom and other instructional materials such as a 100-book library, drill cards and other teacher-made materials. Some effort has also gone into preschool training in the form of a handbook for preschool teachers and a workbook for preschool pupils.

A study in 9 sample multigrade schools located in 3 provinces in the Philippines shows impact of the multigrade system on participation (classroom organization, interaction in the classroom, structure and quality of interactions, student government, parent participation), student performance (enrollment, completion of schooling, academic performance), and sustainability/cost effectiveness. The study concluded that the system has, among other results, broadened the learning situations for the presentation of the subject matter, allowed more participation for girls, built leadership skills of students, made teachers and parents more committed to the system, increased enrollment and increased academic achievement.[13]

Madrasah

The role of *madrasah*, the traditional form of education in Muslim societies, has found new meaning in a number of countries in South and Southeast Asia.[14] Probably in response to the increasing attention to issues of the Muslim communities, education policies are being developed to support the integration of *madrasah* into the mainstream education system. This development is seen as part of education reform supporting quality education.

In 1992, the Indian federal government issued the National Policy on Education and Programme of Action that provides for the modernization of *madrasah*.[15] It states that this

> scheme has been devised to provide financial support to madrasas to introduce subjects like Science, Maths, Social Studies and Languages in their curriculum. The scheme is implemented through State Governments/Union Territories and has been expanded recently to include salary for two teachers instead of one; grant of assistance to State Madrasa Education Boards to prepare text books and organise teachers training programmes; extension of the madrasas up to secondary stage where modernisation upto elementary stage has already been implemented; increase of one time grant for purchase of Science/Maths kits…

This is an example of the government effort to mainstream *madrasah* into the national education systems.

In the Philippines, recent education reform measures include "[e]xpansion of the Madrasah education system for young Muslim Filipinos."[16] The Philippine Department (Ministry)

of Education (DepEd) defines three general objectives supporting the development of *madrasah* education: a) to develop and institutionalize *madrasah* education as a vital component of the national education system; b) to develop through participative consultation involving education stakeholders a framework of national policies as basis for *madrasah* education; and c) to undertake appropriate advocacy initiatives in support of *madrasah* education.[17] In 2004, the government introduced a standard curriculum for *madrasah* education.[18] The curriculum change is premised on the following:[19]

- The global commitment on Education for All to provide access to quality education is a call that includes all forms of educational delivery systems. All children as rights-holders must be given quality education opportunity irrespective of race, color, religion or culture.
- For the Muslims of Mindanao and other parts of the country, the rightful and legitimate aspiration is to have an Islamic Education that is authentic and appropriate for the Bangsa Moro population. They aim to establish Islamic schools that would prepare generations of learned and intellectual Muslims imbued with Islamic values and spiritually prepared to serve the people and the country as a whole.
- In the interest of national unity and the implementation of the 1986 Peace Agreement, Madrasah Education is declared a vital component of the National Education System.
- The significant role of islamic education through the Madaris to provide access to education must be recognized. It is a mechanism of teaching the unreached and providing education that is meaningful, relevant and culture-sensitive for Muslim children.

Pilot classes (Grades 1 and 2 involving 51 classes) using the *madrasah* curriculum in a number of schools in Metro Manila where there are Muslim students have started recently. The pilot classes in Metro Manila are led by 51 Muslim *asatidz* (teachers) who recently completed a 22-day, live-in training program. The government aims to implement the *madrasah* curriculum not only in Mindanao (within the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao or ARMM) but in other parts of the country as well. [20]

In Thailand, due to the resurgence of armed conflict in the Muslim region in southern part of the country, "madrasas or pondoks" will be "encouraged to broaden their syllabuses"[21] in recognition of their importance to the Muslim community. The Thai education minister believes that a "major cause of the unrest [in south Thailand] is the discouragement of wisdoms and understanding of the diversity of culture, race and religion in the region," not Muslim religious schools as suggested by many top security officials.

In Pakistan, where the Muslims compose the dominant population, the same trend exists. The government sees the challenge of evolving an "integrated system of national education by bringing Deeni Madaris and modern schools closer to mainstream especially in curriculum and the scheme of studies." A plan was developed to introduce formal subjects (English, Math, Social/Pakistan Studies and Computer Science) into all Madaris. They will be mainstreamed through provision of grants for salaries of teachers, cost of textbooks, teacher training and equipment.[22]

The new stress on recognizing the role of the *madrasah* is significant in view of the neglect by governments of this traditional form of education that affect significant number of young people. But as stressed by the Thai education minister, the government recognition must rest on respect for the "wisdoms and understanding of the diversity of culture, race and religion." Mainstreaming *madrasah* into the national education system should preserve the inherent characteristics of *madrasah* in relation to the community that it has been serving from the beginning of its existence in South and Southeast Asian Muslim communities. It

is notable that the *madrasah* survived through the years mainly because of private or community support.[23]

Education and girls

Access to education of girls in rural areas remains a challenge to governments. Aside from inadequate program and facilities for girl education, the main problem lies with the traditional view that girls do not need education. Pakistan has several examples that provide an important reminder of the challenge of educating girls in the rural areas. The story of Mukhtar Mai is an inspiring example.

Mukhtar Mai, a rural woman gang raped as a form of traditional community patriarchal punishment, was not deterred from doing the most important task of providing the girls in her community the education that they deserve even if such idea contravenes local tradition. She has been lauded internationally for her courage and sense of mission.[24] She went on to establish a school for girls (Mukhtar Mai Girls' School) using the money she received from the Pakistani government as compensation for the sexual attack.[25] Since her school contradicts the local tradition of not giving girls education, she continues to struggle to ensure that the girls are allowed by the parents and the community as a whole to have access to education.[26]

The Society for the Advancement of Education (SAHE), one of the oldest NGOs in Pakistan and a pioneer in the NGO movement, has a larger scale version of the noble initiative of Mukhtar Mai. SAHE has committed to improving the quality of education through community participation. It established 41 community-based schools[27] for children of primary-school age in disadvantaged Punjab rural and urban communities. Most of the students are girls.

The communities where the schools were established have the following criteria:[28]

- lack of schools for girls;
- at least 50 households each with two school-age girls who do not go to school;
- availability of female and preferably matriculate teachers;
- interest on the part of the community to have a girls' school and to provide space for it; and
- readiness on the part of the majority of parents to pay a small amount as school fees and to buy school books and other educational material for their children.

In communities where even reading and writing are considered bad for girls and therefore for the community, children from SAHE schools organize Child Rights Day, role play, and act in front of big audiences. SAHE was able to make the communities own the schools, the very purpose of its community-based schools project.

Indigenous education

Indigenous peoples in South and Southeast Asian countries have long been suffering from discrimination, economic displacement, displacement due to armed conflicts, as well as threat of loss of language and culture.

Some countries recognize the need to have an education system that suits the needs and situations of indigenous peoples. An indigenous person commented that there is a need for quality education that, unlike the current education, will not be a "process of alienating indigenous youth from indigenous society and culture. Rather, it should develop a critical, yet respectful orientation towards their societies and cultures, providing the resources for indigenous self-development."[29] In line with this view, some initiatives were started with the involvement of the indigenous communities themselves.

The Education for Indigenous Children (EIC) of BRAC provides an example of serving both the need to make the indigenous children become aware of their rights and to de-

velop among the majority Bengali population a positive attitude towards indigenous people.[30]

EIC, which started under its BRAC Education Program (BEP), has the following objectives:

- To increase the enrolment of indigenous children in the mainstream education
- To sensitize the indigenous people about their rights
- To create positive attitudes among the Bangalis about indigenous people
- Introduce indigenous learners to mainstream education by using mother language in primary education.

The program now covers 27 communities of indigenous peoples, 1,839 schools, 48,969 children (56.4% girls), 3,512 indigenous teachers, and 225 indigenous school staffmembers. In addition, there are 200 pre-primary schools with 4,860 (52% girls) children in operation.[31]

EIC likewise develops the capacity of members of the indigenous community by making them school teachers. Teacher training is done with indigenous trainers. Indigenous university students help develop training materials that reflect the needs of indigenous children, and discuss values, culture and other important aspects of life. Some materials were developed through innovative workshops with indigenous people.

The EIC experience provides a number of lessons learned, namely,

- Need-based flexibility
- Inclusion of indigenous people in planning the education program for them
- Teachers, students and supervisors should be from the same indigenous community
- Separate strategy should be in place for smooth operation of the program considering the geographical, cultural and socio-economic condition of the country.

On the island of Mindoro, Philippines, a school for Alangan Mangyan was established in 1989. The school named TUGDAAN Center for Human and Environmental Development (*tugdaan* means seedbed) is a response to the need for an education based on Alangan Mangyan culture. It has a "holistic, functional, relevant and empowering" curriculum. The school aims to "assist the Mangyan people in their efforts towards self-governance and self-determination using a general program designed to build integral and sustainable development for their communities. It sought to respond to the Mangyan people's individual and communal needs guided by the utmost respect for their rights, traditions, and culture."[32]

TUGDAAN's program consists of the following components:

1. Formal Education - using an enriched (indigenized) DepEd curriculum for both youth and adults.
2. Non-formal Education - providing literacy and skills training that are relevant to the needs and realities of the communities being served.
3. Environmental and Resource Management - operated via Sustainable Agriculture and Agro-Forestry Programs.
4. Research Center for Mangyan Culture - consisting of documentation, collection and classification of material and non-material cultural elements of the indigenous peoples in Mindoro.
5. Income Generating Projects - generating funds and hands-on training for students.
6. Capability Building - providing on-going values and skills formation for community leaders, development workers, and volunteer-teachers.

It now has 192 students from Alangan Mangyan and 4 other indigenous communities in the island.

In 1992, DepEd[33] recognized TUGDAAN's formal secondary education program for the Mangyan communities. In 1996, DepEd awarded TUGDAAN as the "Most Outstanding Literacy Program" in the Philippines.[34]

A larger indigenous education program was developed in the Philippines with the help of the Asian Council for People's Culture. It facilitated the establishment of Schools for Indigenous Knowledge and Traditions (SIKAT). Representatives of several indigenous communities in different parts of the Philippines view indigenous education

> …founded on the lifeways, traditions, worldview, culture and spirituality of the native community [as] a basic right of all indigenous people. It is a pathway of education that recognizes wisdom embedded in indigenous knowledge.
>
> Furthermore, indigenous education ensures that the curriculum for the study of science, history and society, culture and arts reflects and responds to the genuine welfare and development of indigenous people.[35]

It promotes a culturally responsive curriculum "… in which all aspects of the tribe's heritage permeate the child's learning experiences. In order to strengthen and maintain our children's identity, their education must be based on and embedded within the experiences of the community to which they belong."

SIKAT network presently comprises more than twenty partner communities in different parts of the country and continues to grow. It implements 3 main programs:

- ***Curriculum development*** - setting the programme's orientational framework in realizing the right of Indigenous Peoples to acquire education in a manner appropriate to their own learning systems and cultural context.
- ***Teacher training*** - building the capacity of communities to plan, manage and implement their vision and developing competencies for the delivery of quality and responsive education.
- ***Networking and advocacy*** - creating the environment for ensuring sustainability by harnessing local resources and government support; providing the venue for inter-tribal interaction that fosters dynamism and strengthened organizational capacities.

SIKAT identifies the core issues underpinning the program's perspective: indigenous people's rights, empowerment and participation, and culture and sustainable development.

In 2003, a video documenting the SIKAT experience entitled *School of the Highlands* was awarded the UNICEF Prize at the 30th Japan Prize International Educational Program Contest. The jurors were[36]

> touched by the words of village elders who struggled with the realization that educational opportunities would not exist for their children unless they create them with their own bare hands. With few resources and little support from the traditional education system, they created their own schools and curriculum to keep ancient traditions alive.

It now collaborates with DepEd at both national and regional levels on teacher training and curriculum development, and with the local governments to gain support for its schools.[37]

In 2006, a college was established for indigenous youth named *Pamulaan* (Seedbed). It is located in Davao city (Mindanao island) and currently has 47 students from 19 indigenous communities from all over the Philippines. It is attached to the University of South Eastern Philippines, and offers degree programs such as Bachelor of Arts in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development, Bachelor of Science in Indigenous Peoples Education, Bachelor of Arts in Peace Building and Multi-Cultural Studies, and Bachelor of Science in Indigenous Agriculture. It also offers "ladderized and modular courses leading to an

associate degree as well as to short-term courses for community leaders and development workers."[38] This is the first tertiary level education institution for indigenous peoples in the Philippines.

The Philippine government policy on indigenous people promotes the concept of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) and aims to incorporate them into the education for indigenous children. The promotion of IKSP implements the 1997 law on indigenous peoples known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) which states that the

> The State recognizes its obligations to respond to the strong expression of the [Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples] ICCs/IPs for cultural integrity by assuring maximum ICC/IP participation in the direction of education, health, as well as other services of ICCs/IPs, in order to render such services more responsive to the needs and desires of these communities.[39]

DepEd has been working with the government agency established by IPRA, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), in implementing education programs for the indigenous peoples. NCIP has developed a 4-year plan (Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples - 2004-2008) with a section on education. The plan "recognizes the critical role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices and indigenous systems of governance in the realization of their aspirations on cultural integrity." It is a

> rights-based plan, the attainment of development outputs are anchored on the aspirations and interests of the IP sector. It aims to expand and equalize access to economic and social opportunities. It is an attempt [at] provid[ing] a picture of the realities faced by these populations, what has been done, what is being done, and what remains to be done for our 12 million Indigenous Peoples.[40]

The experiences of TUGDAAN and SIKAT probably represent the experiences of other educational initiatives of indigenous communities in other South and Southeast Asian countries. Indigenous communities work to preserve and enrich their cultures and practices and sustain their livelihood while making themselves able to relate to the larger society, and the changing global context.

There are also education initiatives that aim at making the mainstream school system respond to the needs of indigenous students. BRAC in Bangladesh has the so-called "Cultural Integration of Ethnic Minority Groups" initiative implemented in 500 schools in 14 regions of the country where 4,500 students from ethnic minority communities (such as Garo, Manipuri, Shantal, Orao, Pahan, Dalu, Khasia) study alongside students from the majority society. BRAC trains its staff on how to "interact and socialize with ethnic teachers and students."[41] Other initiatives incorporate the issue of indigenous peoples in the content of lesson plans and other teaching and learning materials.

Private school programs

Schools are venues for understanding and practicing equality and non-discrimination if there are programs deliberately created for the purpose. In the context of continuing competition-oriented education, schools are pressured to offer programs that make students excel in mathematics, science, English language and information technology with much less stress on education about societal issues. Several experiences, however, show that there is no justification for trading off social concern for math-science-language-communication excellence. Schools, especially the private ones, have the capability to reach out to the disadvantaged sectors of society without sacrificing quality education.

Field visits

Montfort College, a private school in Chiang Mai, Thailand, [42] employs "campus

ministry activities to help students relate with the Creator, their fellow Thais, and nature." Students are allowed to directly experience these relationships by visiting the homes of the elderly, orphanages, hospitals, temples, cottage industries, and minority ethnic groups to know "society, the people's suffering, their toil and exploitation."

The school has a field visit program involving an indigenous people's community in Chiangmai province. One report describes the program as follows:

> This extracurricular activity provides students the chance to know the Pagayo hill tribes firsthand through a visit to a dormitory for Pagayo hill tribe students, who study at a nearby town's high school. Montfort students live with the Pagayo students for a few days and experience their culture and way of life and visit the Pagayo hill tribes in the mountains. Montfort students thus learn to value Pagayo hill tribes' rights to their own culture, livelihood, and way of life. Montfort started to offer this field exposure program to students of other schools, mainly from well-to-do families. The program provides possibly the only opportunity for students to learn about indigenous people's life.[43]

The program is meant to make students "appreciate human rights from the perspective of the disadvantaged."

Twinning program

MelJol is an NGO based in Mumbai city in India. [44] Its mission is to work toward an equitable social structure within a pluralistic society, i.e., one that is integrated, where different cultures coexist.[45] It helps children imbibe positive values, and promotes, at the very least, tolerance, and, ideally, peaceful coexistence. Its strategic thrust is to include child's rights education in the school system by modifying the existing syllabus and providing new reference books.[46]

The Twinning Program is MelJol's core program. Twinning means linking a municipal school to a nearby private school. Children from both schools meet and interact with each other in a non-threatening environment. Thus one class from each of the two schools with children belonging to different socioeconomic backgrounds are paired together.

The twinning program aims

a. to sensitize the children to one another and to their environment;
b. to modify certain perceptions that children may have about one another and about other groups on people in their environment;
c. to provide an equity-oriented perspective to issues related to vulnerable children.[47]

The twinning program module runs parallel in the private as well as the municipal schools. It comprises of several sessions:

a. orientation sessions - to provide the children an understanding of the program, and lay the ground for equity education;
b. interaction sessions - the children from the two schools meet and participate in several creative activities together. Friendship bonds are also created in this process;
c. post-interaction sessions - to make children participate in the thinking process where they also question their previously held stereotypes and prejudices;
d. feedback sessions - to provide children an opportunity to evaluate the program and make suggestions for developing it further.

It was observed that private school children initially would not sit on the floor and the municipal school children would cluster with children from their own school. Both groups would be wary of each other at the beginning. But as the games and activities

get underway, the children would soon come together. At the end of the interactions, the children would feel sorry for leaving their newly-found friends.

An evaluation of the 1996-1997 activities provide some important points:

1. approximately 90% of the children enjoyed the activities immensely as the sessions contained games and information;
2. the interaction sessions were a completely different experience for the children and most of them preferred the second interaction as they had become familiar to their twins during the session;
3. the private school children felt that initially municipal school children were shy and reserved but after the games they opened up and interacted well and this problem did not arise in the second interaction as the twins knew each other;
4. the municipal school children realized that the private school children were very friendly and communicative and not snobbish as they had expected them to be;
5. the children also felt that they should meet each other more often for a longer period of time so they would be able to keep in touch with each other;
8. it was also felt that the two interactions were spaced out which created a constraint for strengthening friendship bonds;
9. children felt the need for MelJol in the following years of their schooling and did not appreciate the program stopping a year after and wished for more frequent sessions;
10. picnics away from schools, camps and overnight trips for more fun and enjoyment were also wished for.

The overall feeling was that MelJol's activities were interesting and their opinions regarding the twin school children changed after the interactions.

Working with communities

Loreto Sealdah is a private school in Kolkata, India with 1,500 female students, 721 of which are from very poor families. [48] The school helps the poor students and even their families not only on their school needs but also in the socio-economic needs of their families. 60% of the poor students reside in sprawling slums. These children, in their turn, along with those who pay fees are involved in reaching out to others who are even less privileged than themselves through a broad spectrum of services.

The school supports since 1985 programs that provide students exposure to societal issues. The programs involve rural villages (Village Program), street children (Rainbow Program) and child workers (Hidden Domestic Child Labor and Childline) in the cities. The students witness the appreciation of the programs by people in Kolkata and other parts of the country. People can see how successful this type of education has been in preparing agents of human change. As a result, the program has been taken up by various schools all over the country.

Loreto Sealdah's program has both classroom and fieldwork components. For intellectual input inside the classroom, lesson plans have been prepared such as the following:[49]

Lesson 1: *Rights of the Child*,
suitable for 10 – 12 year olds
Lesson 2:*All men are equal, but…*,
suitable for 13 – 15 year olds
Lesson 3: *A world we ignore – Survey*,
suitable for 14 – 16 year olds.

For the practical lessons outside the classroom, several areas for practical exposure of students have been identified such as education, child labor, nutrition, shelter, and love and belonging.

Textbook review

Part of the current issues on inter-State relations in Asia is on textbooks. If human rights are to be learned in schools a serious review of textbooks is in order. There is a need to properly determine how the textbooks promote human rights or devalue them. Textbooks should contain both correct information and the proper presentation of human rights and issues.

The problems on textbooks and education policies in general raise several human rights education issues:

- the role of the education system in perpetuating what is perceived to be the dominant character of a country;
- the role of textbooks in maintaining discrimination against certain social groups, and people of other countries;
- the need for truthfulness in presenting history in textbooks; and
- the use of scientific methods in weeding out myths in history textbooks.[50]

Discrimination is promoted when the textbooks exclude information on certain members of society in order to paint a society featuring only particular group, gender, or class of people. In other cases, some members of society are portrayed in a distorted manner. The exclusion of the notion diversity of people in society or nation may indicate bias in favor of some groups or classes of people, and against others. It is thus important for textbooks to reflect the realities of society as far as diversity of people, their cultures, livelihoods, roles in community affairs, and other facets of their lives.

The textbook review undertaken in Indonesia in 2000 on English language textbooks is a good example. The study found that a particular group of Indonesians (Javanese) are mainly featured in the textbooks, and virtually ignore other groups in the country. As a result the study recommends, among others, the following:[51]

- Educators and textbook writers should ensure that textbooks do not contain discriminatory and stereotyping language and content in relation to gender, socioeconomic, local cultures, and ethnic diversity.
- Educators—especially from outside Java—should be encouraged and helped to develop curricular materials and write textbooks suitable and relevant to local needs.
- Textbook writers at the national level should involve local educators as partners and empower them to develop learning materials that address the diverse cultural, racial, personal, and academic needs of their students.
- Teachers should be aware of the growing diversity in schools and always attempt to create a learning environment in which differences are recognized and accepted while providing students with a common set of norms and values.

Textbook reviews done in Pakistan and India, and reports about textbooks in Myanmar/Burma and Thailand, also show the need for textbook revision to be able to expunge discriminatory and false statements aimed at developing national pride while projecting people in the neighboring countries as enemies. [52]

Some lessons

Considering the few experiences presented in this paper, there are some lessons worth pointing out. These lessons indicate how the initiatives for communities that have been discriminated or excluded may be undertaken or improved as the case may be.

One lesson is on the role of the community. The experiences presented in this paper show that programs undertaken in close collaboration with the community is essential in maintaining relevant education. Community ownership is important in ensuring that the programs do not alienate the young from their

own community, and instead encourage the valuing of their community's wisdom and cultures alongside the knowledge and skills that mainstream education may provide.

But experiences also show that the strong role of the community may be an obstacle to the introduction of education systems that adhere to human rights principles such as education for girls. In this case, the educational intervention has to seek a different mode of relationship with the community. Hopefully, the community will at least allow the education program to develop in order to see its value.

Another lesson is the role of government. The government may either take the initiative of establishing education policies and programs for rural and other dis-advantaged communities, or recognize and support the educational initiatives of these communities. The mainstreaming of *madrasah*, indigenous education, girl education, and other initiatives is important with the condition that positive elements of these education initiatives are retained.

The sensitization of those involved in the programs be they students, teachers, government education officials is another lesson. As in the case of private schools trying to reach out to the disadvantaged communities, the defining character is the experiential process of giving the students as well as teachers the opportunity to understand the value of non-discrimination and equality.

A common challenge

The experiences and programs presented in this article are illustrative examples of what can be done to have both accessible and quality education and anti-discrimination education in South and Southeast Asia.

Governments, supported to a large extent by some private schools and NGOs, adopt the inclusive education system as a policy. They all speak of implementing relevant, culturally-sensitive, effective and sustainable education programs. But there are also problems that would keep governments and other institutions from achieving these important goals.

The practical questions of reach and content of the programs should be monitored. Facilities and human resources may not be available to enable the programs to reach most of the disadvantaged communities that need them. Also, the socio-political and economic situation of some communities may prevent those who wish to avail of the programs from doing so. Poverty and social exclusion mechanisms are clear obstacles in this regard. Ways and means of addressing these obstacles have to be explored.

Networking among those dealing with similar program or community/people would be helpful. Collaboration between national and state/local governments, schools, NGOs, academe and even private corporations should be a major part of the national and local community efforts.

Considering that despite the existence of these educational programs discrimination in all forms remains rampant in many countries in South and Southeast Asia, there is much ground for greater collaboration among these stakeholders. And in doing so, maintain the important task of keeping the programs expanding and developing.

Endnotes

***** This article is a slightly updated version of the paper presented at the Regional Expert Seminar on Combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances: Role of Education, organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 19-21 September 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand.

[1] This article does not discuss the education against Dalit discrimination nor the Dowa education.

[2] Cited in Saroj Pandey, "Human Rights Education in Schools: The Indian Experience" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 8 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2004) page 97.

[3] The author has reservation with the use of the word "backward" in this education policy statement. This word is subject to the interpretation that the mi-

nority groups have no positive contribution, or do not have the capacity to make such contribution, to the society because they are simply way behind modern civilization. This contradicts the idea of treating all cultures equal and not subject to stereotypical judgments. From a human rights perspective there may be some questionable practices among the minority groups but they are not grounds for declaring them backward. No society can claim full subscription to the human rights principles. Every society is likely to have practices that are questionable from a human rights perspective.

[4] *The Development of Education - National Report - Sri Lanka*, Ministry of Education (August 2004).

[5] "Education revitalized under President" in *South Asian Media Net*, 24 December 2004, www.southasianmedia.net/cnn.cfm?id=170236&category=Social%20Sectors&Country=SRI%20LANKA

[6] *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - A Programme for Universal Elementary Education - Framework for Implementation*, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Elementary Education and Literacy in www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/ssa/ssa_1.htm#1.0

[7] For a preliminary discussion on the problems of implementation see Arun C. Mehta, "Some Reflections on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan," in *Education For All in India*, www.educationforallinindia.com/page165.html

[8] See A.Z.M. Sakhawat Hossain, "Human Rights Education in Bangladesh: BRAC Program," in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 2 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 1999).

[9] See powerpoint presentation of Orathai Moolkum entitled *How to Implement Child Rights/Human Rights in Thailand*.

[10] Ray Chesterfield, Kjell Enge, Bruce Newman and Heather Simpson, "Active Learning and Girls Participation in Multigrade Schools: The Philippines Case" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 8 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2004) pages 125-126.

[11] Chesterfield, et al. citing Arboleda, Jairo, Chiappe, C. & Colbert V. 1991. "The New School Program: More and Better Primary Education for Children in Rural Areas in Colombia" in Levin, H. and Lockheed, M. (eds) *Effective Schools in Developing Countries*. Document No. PHREE/91/38. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

[12] Chesterfield, et al., ibid., page 127.

[13] Chesterfield, et al., ibid., page 137.

[14] Islam is said to have started to take root in Southeast Asia during the 13th century. Contact between Arabs and the people in Southeast Asia, however, had occurred much earlier. See Oscar L. Evangelista, "Some Aspects of the History of Islam in Southeast Asia," in Peter Gowing, editor, *Understanding Islam and Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon city: New Day Publishers, 1988). The traditional form of Islamic education now known as *madrasah* was first established in the Philippines in 1450. The *madrasah* in other Southeast Asian countries such as those in Indonesia must have been established earlier. The present *madrasah* is largely supported by private funds collected from the local community as well as donations from abroad (such as countries in the Middle East). See Mohamed Ariff, editor, *The Islamic Voluntary Sector in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore: 1991).

[15] *Annual Report of the Union Government of Secondary Education and Higher Education: 1999-2000* in www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/ar_99-00/arhrplan.htm. The modernization of *madrasah* was likewise provided in the Programme of Action (POA) of NPE 1986. See Pandey, op. cit.

[16] Yvonne Chua, "DepEd's Fear," Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) , www.pcij.org/blog/?p=257

[17] See *Education Post*, volume 34, no. 5, March 11-15, 2005, in www.deped.gov.ph/posts.asp?dp=37

[18] The introduction of standard curriculum among Islamic schools was started in Singapore in the late 1970s. Amina Tyabji, "The Management of Muslim Funds in Singapore," in Ariff, op. cit., page 220.

[19] Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris, DepED Order 51, s. 2004, 28 August 2004. In December of the same year, the Philippine Department of Education held a national orientation workshop to implement the department order (as per DepEd Memorandum 456, s. 2004, 26 November 2004).

[20] Alcuin Papa, *Madrasah now in Metro schools*, 30 August 2005, in news.inq7.net/breaking/index.php?index=2&col=&story_id=48594

[21] Nopporn Wong-Anan, "Former fighter tackles Thai Muslim unrest at school," in today.reuters.com/News/CrisesArticle.aspx?storyId=BKK178580

[22] Challenges in the Education Sector in Pakistan, Ministry of Education, Islamabad, Pakistan (undated).

[23] See Ariff, op. cit., for discussions on the resources drawn from Islamic practice of *zakat* (wealth tax) as experienced in Southeast Asia.

[24] She was recognized by *Time Magazine* as one of Asia's Heroes for 2004 (Asma Jahangir, "Mukhtar Mai - Challenging a tribal code of "honor", *Time Magazine,* 11 October 2004). See also the editorial of *The Japan Times* (3 July 2005), "A Victory for Pakistan's Women," urging the Pakistani government to protect her, and respect women's rights.

[25] Visit http://www.mukhtarmai.com/Current

Projects.htm. She also established a school for boys (Farid Gujjar School for Boys), see Zahid Hussain, "For once, a rape victim fought back," *Daily Yomiuri* (2005).

[26] Hussain, ibid.

[27] As of 2001.

[28] "The Society for the Advancement of Education's Community-based Schools Program in Pakistan," in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 4 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2001) page 6.

[29] Jayl Langub, "Access of Indigenous Children to Quality Education," in *Malaysian Human Rights Day 2002 - Proceedings of the Conference on Human Rights and Education* (Kuala Lumpur: SUHAKAM, 2002) page 215.

[30] See IEC note sent by A.Z.M. Sakhawat Hossain via e-mail to the author, 26 September 2005.

[31] Ibid.

[32] See tabangmindanaw.mariansolidarity.com/features/041019-speech3.htm

[33] Then named Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS).

[34] In 2005, the person who started TUGDAAN, Benjamin Abadiano, was given a Ramon Magsaysay award under the "emergent leadership" category in recognition of his work with the Alangan Mangyan. TUGDAAN was established with the support of the religious congregation Sisters of the Holy Spirit which has missionary work in the Alangan Mangyan community.

[35] Kalinga Declaration (1999) in www.acpc.ph/philosophy/kalinga.htm

[36] www.nhk.or.jp/jp-prize/english/2003/jyusyou_09.html

[37] *Balitang Sikat* newsletter, www.apc.ph/newsletter/sibat1.htm

[38] Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, "A college for indigenous peoples," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 June 2006, in http://opinion.inq7.net/inquireropinion/columns/view_article.php?article_id=5935

[39] Section 2f, Chapter 1 - General Provisions, *"The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997."* (Republic Act Number 8371).

[40] Message of Ruben Dasay A. Lingating, Chairperson of NCIP in *Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples - 2004-2008.*

[41] See BRAC website www.brac.net

[42] Anurak Nidhibhadrabhor, "Thailand: The Montfort College Experience" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 7 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2004).

[43] Ibid., page 17.

[44] MelJol Team, "MelJol: Hum Bacchon Ka", *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 1, (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 1998).

[45] By educating children and their significant others on child rights and responsibilities, MelJol addresses prejudices focusing on the following key concepts:

- Equity: Every human being should be recognized as uniquely different and as contributing positively to society. Thus, as equal members of society, children should have equal access to resources and opportunities for survival, protection, development, and participation.
- Ageism: People should be treated with respect regardless of their age.
- Gender: People should not be discriminated against because of their sex.
- Ethnicity: People's ethnicity should be respected rather than judged according to cultural assumptions.
- Classism: People's socioeconomic class is not a cause for any prejudice.
- Ableism: Attitudes toward and views on the differently abled should be similar to those of any other person or group.

[46] Meljol produced a couple of learning materials such as *Twinkle Star Series* Standards I, II, III, IV and *Mel Jol Explorers* Standards V, VI, VII in 1998.

[47] MelJol Team, "MelJol: Hum Bacchon Ka," in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 1 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 1998), pages 83-84.

[48] Sr. M. Cyril, "Human Rights Education in School: Loreto Sealdah" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 8 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2005).

[49] These lesson plans are contained in the *We Are the World* series (Mumbai: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd, 1989) and edited by the several educators including the principal of Loreto Sealdah (Sr. M. Cyril, IBVM).

[50] "Textbooks for Human Rights" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 5 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2002) page 167.

[51] Anita Lie, "The Multicultural Curriculum: Education for Peace and Development" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 6 (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA, 2003) page 97

[52] See "Textbooks for Human Rights," op. cit.